

SHOPPING BAG HANDGRIP-HOLDING SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

The present application is related to prior provisional application Serial Number 60/410,874, filed 09/13/02, entitled "SHOPPING BAG HANDGRIP-HOLDING SYSTEM", from which priority is claimed, the contents of which are incorporated herein by this reference and are not admitted to be prior art with respect to the present invention by the mention in this cross-reference section.

BACKGROUND

This invention relates to providing a system for improved handling of shopping bags carrying merchandise. More specifically, this invention relates to a handgrip-holding device for holding a plurality of such bags having extended looping handles, such as the plastic shopping bags most commonly used for holding grocery items.

Typically, when people shop, particularly at a grocery store, they transport their merchandise from the store (and typically into a vehicle) using multiple such plastic shopping bags to carry the merchandise. The merchandise is commonly packed in such merchandise bags, typically plastic, and most typically having two looping handles (one from each side of the top of the bag which, when brought together, partially or fully close the top of the bag to assist in preventing items from

falling out). Typically, a person grabs both handles with one or both hands to carry the bag. Quite often, a person chooses to carry multiple such bags on one or both hands. The weight of the merchandise, when carrying multiple combined bags, often causes the bag handles to press firmly into the person's hand, which can be quite uncomfortable.

Furthermore, many supermarkets now provide a discount card that contains individual customer information. Such discount cards also contain specific customer bar codes. Typically, such customer information is placed on a unique supermarket shopping card or key-ring card. The supermarkets often discount merchandise based on use of such customer code. These customer cards are easily misplaced or lost.

OBJECTS AND FEATURES OF THE INVENTION

A primary object and feature of the present invention is to provide a system for handgrip-holding of multiple bags having extended loop handles.

It is a further object and feature of the present invention to provide such a system that provides a handgrip-holder.

It is a further object and feature of the present invention to provide such a system that provides for storing individual or group customer coding directly on the handgrip-holder.

It is a further object and feature of the present invention to provide such a system that provides advertising indicia.

It is a further object and feature of the present invention to provide such a system that provides a business method for use.

A further primary object and feature of the present invention is to provide such a system that is efficient, inexpensive, and handy. Other objects and features of this invention will become apparent with reference to the following descriptions.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with a preferred embodiment hereof, this invention provides a handgrip-holding system, comprising at least one holder for carrying at least one shopping bag, having at least one extended loop handle, comprising, in combination: first support means for supporting the at least one shopping bag; and second support means for supporting such first support means; wherein such first support means comprises, substantially horizontal surface means for holding a plurality of the at least one extended loop handles, and transit means for permitting removable transit of the at least one extended loop handles to such substantially horizontal surface means; wherein such second support means comprises handle means for permitting substantially full-hand grasping of such second support means; and wherein such first support means comprises a concave curve.

It also provides such a system wherein such first support means comprises centering means for locating the at least one

extended loop handle in a substantially vertical line with a gravitational center of such handle means. And, it provides such a system wherein such concave curve comprises an effective radius of curvature at least as large as a largest radius of an external perimeter of the holder. Further, it provides such a system wherein such transit means comprises vertical blocking means for blocking accidental egress of the at least one extended loop handle. Even further, it provides such a system wherein such transit means is located above such vertical blocking means. And, it provides such a system wherein such first support means and such second support means are substantially co-planar.

In accordance with another preferred embodiment hereof, this invention provides a handgrip-holding system, comprising at least one holder for carrying at least one shopping bag, having at least one extended loop handle, comprising, in combination: at least one first supporter structured and arranged to support the at least one shopping bag; and at least one second supporter structured and arranged to support such at least one first supporter; wherein such at least one first supporter comprises, at least one substantially horizontal surface structured and arranged to hold a plurality of the at least one extended loop handle, and at least one transit structured and arranged to permit removable transit of the at least one extended loop handle to such at least one substantially horizontal surface; wherein

such at least one second supporter comprises at least one handle structured and arranged to permit substantial full-hand grasping of such second supporter; and wherein such at least one first supporter comprises a concave curve.

Additionally, it provides such a system wherein such at least one first supporter comprises at least one centerer structured and arranged to locate the at least one extended loop handle in at least one substantially vertical line with at least one gravitational center of such at least one handle. And, it provides such a system wherein such concave curve comprises an effective radius of curvature at least as large as a largest radius of an external perimeter of the holder. Moreover, it provides such a system wherein such at least one transit comprises at least one vertical blocker structured and arranged to block accidental egress of the at least one extended loop handle. It also provides such a system wherein such transit is located above such at least one vertical blocker. And, it provides such a system wherein such at least one vertical blocker comprises a barbed hook. It even provides such a system wherein such at least one vertical blocker comprises a barbed hook. And, it also provides such a system wherein such at least one first supporter and such at least one second supporter are substantially co-planar.

In accordance with yet another preferred embodiment hereof,

this invention provides a method of doing business for use with at least one handgrip-holding system, comprising at least one handgrip-holder, having at least one traceable bar-code, for user carrying of at least one shopping bag, having at least one extended loop handle, comprising the steps of: supplying the user with the at least one handgrip-holder; registering the at least one traceable bar-code to the user; providing a reward to the user for return of the at least one handgrip-holder.

Furthermore, it provides such a method further comprising the step of tracking the usage of the at least one handgrip-holder by the user. And, it provides such a method further comprising the step of providing advertising indicia on such at least one handgrip-holder. It also provides such a method wherein such advertising indicia comprise a logo.

In accordance with still another preferred embodiment hereof, this invention provides each and every novel feature, element, combination, step and/or method disclosed or suggested by this patent application.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a front view of the handgrip-holding system according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a first face of a preferred handgrip-holder in one typical use of the invention.

FIG. 2 is a second-face view of the handgrip-holder of the

handgrip-holding system embodiment of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a perspective first-face view of the handgrip-holder of FIG. 1..

FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view through the section 4-4 of FIG. 2.

FIG. 5 is a diagrammatic view illustrating a business method of the handgrip-holding system according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF BEST MODE AND PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

Reference is now made to the drawings. FIG. 1 is a front view of the handgrip-holding system **100** according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 2 is a second-face view of the handgrip-holder of the handgrip-holding system embodiment of FIG. 1. FIG. 3 is a perspective first-face-side view of a handgrip-holder **102** of the handgrip-holding system **100** according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 4 is a cross sectional view through the section 4-4 of FIG. 2.

Preferably, the handgrip-holding system **100** comprises a handgrip-holder **102**, as shown. Preferably, the handgrip-holder **102** is substantially planar, comprising a first face **104** and a second face **106**, preferably both the first face **104** and second face **106** being essentially parallel to each other and relatively flat, as shown. Preferably, the handgrip-holder **102** comprises

about an equal thickness throughout (having an equal cross-section), preferably about one-half-inch thick (see FIG. 4). The above arrangement is advantageous, for example, in one or more of the following areas: manufacturing processes; stacking; bar-code reading; indicia printing. Upon reading the teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as economics, material choice, durability, strength characteristics, etc., other material thickness, such as non-equal cross-sections, and more or less than one-half-inch thick, etc., may suffice.

Preferably, the handgrip-holder **102** is made of a durable material, preferably plastic. Under appropriate circumstances, other materials may suffice. For example, depending upon the durability and economics desired, the handgrip-holder **102** may be made from wood, stamped metal or carbon-fiber. Most preferably, the handgrip-holder **102** is made from an inexpensive material that is cost-effective for the supplier and durable (for multiple usage). Upon reading the teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as economics, material choice, durability, strength characteristics, etc., other materials, such as, for example, one-time-use heavy cardboard handgrip-holder, etc., may suffice.

Preferably, the handgrip-holder **102** is about four and three-quarters inches in length, about four inches in height and about one-half inch in width. Upon reading the teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as economics, material choice, durability, strength characteristics, etc., other dimensions, for example, to accommodate larger or smaller hands, depending on the target populace the supplier is supplying, may suffice.

Preferably, the handgrip-holder **102** comprises a first support portion **108** (embodying herein first support means for supporting the at least one shopping bag; and, embodying herein at least one first supporter structured and arranged to support the at least one shopping bag) and a second support portion **110** (embodying herein second support means for supporting such first support means; and, embodying herein at least one second supporter structured and arranged to support such at least one first supporter), as shown. Preferably, as shown, the first faces of first support portion **108** and second support portion **110** are substantially co-planar, as are preferably the second faces thereof (embodying herein wherein such first support means and such second support means are substantially co-planar; and, embodying herein wherein such at least one first supporter and such at least one second supporter are substantially co-planar).

As stated above, this arrangement is advantageous, for example, in one or more of the following areas: manufacturing processes; stacking; bar-code reading; indicia printing. Upon reading the teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as economics, material choice, durability, strength characteristics, user preference, etc., other arrangements than co-planar, such as, for example, slightly rounded, curved, etc., may suffice.

Preferably, the first support portion **108** comprises, as shown, a slightly concave curve **112** (embodying herein wherein such first support means comprises a concave curve; and, embodying herein wherein such at least one first supporter comprises a concave curve) having a substantially horizontal surface **114**, as shown (see FIG. 3 and FIG. 4), for holding one or more extended loop handles **116** of a merchandise bag **118**, as shown (embodying herein wherein such first support means comprises substantially horizontal surface means for holding a plurality of the at least one extended loop handles; and embodying herein wherein such at least one first supporter comprises at least one substantially horizontal surface structured and arranged to hold a plurality of the at least one extended loop handles). Most preferably, the slightly concave curve **112** has a radius larger than the largest radius of the exterior perimeter **117** of the

handgrip-holder **102** (as shown, embodying herein wherein such concave curve comprises an effective radius of curvature at least as large as a largest radius of an external perimeter of the holder; and embodying herein wherein such concave curve comprises an effective radius of curvature at least as large as a largest radius of an external perimeter of the holder). This arrangement provides for a longer length (preferably about two and one-half inches on the described embodiment and more than fifty-percent of the potential length of the handgrip-holder **102** being available for holding) on the substantially horizontal surface **114** of the first support portion **108**, preferably, to hold more bags in a more balanced manner than, for example, a U-shaped or much tighter radius. Preferably, first support portion **108** further comprises an opening **120**, preferably narrow, as shown (preferably, about one-quarter inch). Upon reading the teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art, will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as economics, materials, durability, strength characteristics, etc., other dimensions and radii, may suffice.

Preferably, opening **120** provides a transit means for the looping handles **116** to pass into aperture **122** and onto the first support portion **108**, as shown (embodying herein transit means for permitting removable transit of the at least one extended loop handles to such substantially horizontal surface means; and,

embodying herein at least one transit structured and arranged to permit removable transit of the at least one extended loop handle to such at least one substantially horizontal surface).

Preferably, the first support portion **108** further comprises a hook **124**, adapted, as shown, to vertical blocking of accidental egress of bag handles, preferably extending beyond the vertical rise of the end-portion **126** of the first support portion **122**, as shown (embodying herein wherein such transit means comprises vertical blocking means for blocking accidental egress of the at least one extended loop handle; and, embodying herein wherein such at least one transit comprises at least one vertical blocker structured and arranged to block accidental egress of the at least one extended loop handle). Preferably, the hook **124** is barbed (embodying herein wherein such at least one vertical blocker comprises a barbed hook), as shown, and preferably extends more than about ninety-five-degrees from a horizontal axis starting along the substantially horizontal surface **114** of the first support portion **108**, as shown. Preferably, the narrow opening **120** (i.e., transit) is directly above the hook **124** (embodying herein wherein such transit means is located above such vertical blocking means; and, embodying herein wherein such transit is located above such at least one vertical blocker) and functions in combination with the hook **124** to assist in preventing the accidental egress of the extended loop handles **116**

that are being supported by the first support portion **108**, as shown. The above arrangement is particularly helpful while carrying the merchandise bags **118** with the handgrip-holder **102**. Upon reading the teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as economic issues, user preferences, durability, weight load, etc., other arrangements for preventing the accidental egress of the extended loop handles **116** may suffice. For example, more than one hook **124**; one or more flaps; a serpentine opening, etc., may suffice. Furthermore, the opening **120** provides a transit means for the looping handles **116** to pass out of aperture **122** and be removed from the handgrip-holder **102**.

Preferably, the second support portion **110** supports the first support portion **108**, as shown. Preferably, the second support portion **110** is connected to the first support portion **108** by a middle portion **128**, as shown. Preferably, the middle portion **128** is capable of supporting the weight load of the first support portion **108**. Most preferably, the middle portion **128** is solid. Upon reading the teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as economic issues, user preferences, durability, weight load, etc., other

methods of construction, such as a non-solid middle support, may suffice. Preferably, the second support portion **110** comprises a handle portion **130**, as shown. Preferably, the handle portion **130** comprises an aperture **132** (preferably, an oval shape about one and one-half inches high and about three and one-quarter inches long) and a bar **134**, preferably curved, preferably convex on the exterior **133** and flat on the interior **135** (see FIG. 3), for use as a handgrip **136** such that a hand **138** can substantially hold the handgrip with a full-hand grasp, as shown (this arrangement embodies herein wherein such second support means comprises handle means for permitting substantially full-hand grasping of such second support means; and, embodies herein wherein such at least one second supporter comprises at least one handle structured and arranged to permit substantial full-hand grasping of such second supporter).

Preferably, the slightly concave curve **112** is placed such that the lowest point of the curve **137** is directly below the center (gravitational) axis of the handgrip **136**, as shown. Furthermore, most preferably, as the user places the extended loop handles **116** onto the first support portion **108**, the extended loop handles **116** spread outward from the lowest point of the curve **137** (center axis) to assist having a more balanced load for carrying by the user (this arrangement embodies herein wherein

such first support means comprises centering means for locating the at least one extended loop handle in a substantially vertical line with a gravitational center of such handle means; and embodies herein wherein such at least one first supporter comprises at least one centerer structured and arranged to locate the at least one extended loop handle in at least one substantially vertical line with at least one gravitational center of such at least one handle).

Reference is now made to FIG. 2 with continued reference to the above-described figures. FIG. 2 is a second-face view of a handgrip-holder **102** of the handgrip-holding system **100** according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. Preferably, the handgrip-holder **102** comprises indicia **140**, as shown.

Preferably, the indicia **140** are used for indicating the sponsor, Logo, Trade name or store name of the merchandiser utilizing the handgrip-holding system **100** (embodying herein the step of providing advertising indicia on such at least one handgrip-holder; and, embodying herein wherein such advertising indicia comprises the logo of such designated representative). Upon reading the teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as economics, user preference, advertising preferences, etc., other indicia **140** arrangements may suffice. Further, it is preferable that the

handgrip-holder **102** comprises bar code indicia **142**. Preferably, the bar code indicia **142** may be associated with a certain customer and used either instead of, or in combination with, a store tracking system. For example, some supermarkets have customer credit cards or customer bar code cards which are scanned during checkout. Use of such cards often results in discounts to the user. Most preferably, the bar code indicia **142** on the handgrip-holder **102** provides an identifying means to allocate a reward for encouraging multiple use and return of the handgrip-holder **102** by the customer. Preferably, such multiple usage may be encouraged in a multitude of ways, most preferably by offering the customer a discount for using the handgrip-holder **102**. Upon reading the teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as economics, user preference, advertising preferences, etc., other methods of utilizing the bar code indicia **142**, such as, for example, offering an instant merchandise credit or coupon discount to the buyer, may suffice. FIG. 5 is a diagrammatic view illustrating a business method of the handgrip-holding system **100** according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. Preferably, a user **144** receives a handgrip-holder **102** while purchasing merchandise at a store **146** (embodying herein supplying the user with the at least one handgrip-holder). Upon reading the

teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as marketing preference, economic considerations, user preferences, etc., other methods of distributing the handgrip-holder **102**, such as vending machines, point-of purchase-displays, etc., may suffice.

Preferably, the bar code indicia **142** is registered to the user **144** to track the handgrip-holder **102** and provide an identifying means to, for example, allocate a reward for return or re-use (embodying herein registering the at least one traceable bar-code to the user). Preferably, in use, purchased merchandise is placed into a merchandise bag **118** having looping handles **116**, as shown. Preferably, the user **144** utilizes the handgrip-holder **102** to carry the merchandise bag **118** to the final destination **146**, most likely a home or business, as shown. Most preferably, the user **144** returns with the handgrip-holder **102** during the next visit to the store **146**. Preferably, the bar code indicia **142** is scanned at the store **146** to provide the store **146** with information of the registered user **144** of the handgrip-holder **102** and such that the store **146** may issue a reward **150**, preferably a monetary stipend (embodying herein wherein said at least one reward comprises at least one monetary stipend), such as a cash, credit or coupon to the user **144** (this arrangement

embodies herein providing a reward to the user for return of the at least one handgrip-holder, e.g., to a designated representative). Upon reading the teachings of this specification, those with ordinary skill in the art will now understand that, under appropriate circumstances, considering issues such as marketing preference, economic considerations, user preferences, etc., other methods of using the handgrip-holder, for example, returning the handgrip-holder to any of a set of stores or retailers, may suffice.

Most preferably, the usage of the handgrip-holder **102** is also tracked by the store or other interested party (embodying herein the step of tracking the usage of the at least one handgrip-holder by the user). In another embodiment, the business method may include simply a cash deposit for return, much like recyclable bottles having a cash deposit.

Although applicant has described applicant's preferred embodiments of this invention, it will be understood that the broadest scope of this invention includes such modifications as diverse shapes and sizes and materials. Such scope is limited only by the below claims as read in connection with the above specification.

Further, many other advantages of applicant's invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from the above descriptions and the below claims.